

imprints

The Newsletter of Literacy BC

Welcome to the first Spring of the new millennium!

In this first issue of *Imprints* 2001 we will share with you some of the exciting activities that have been happening in the field of family literacy in our province this past fall and winter.

In addition, this issue showcases the writing of two of our Youth Community Action students, highlights some of the valuable work being done in family literacy in 6 regions in B.C., and includes a "heads-up" on upcoming events, conferences, and funding possibilities. We also have a brief report on our November 2000 provincial conference from Executive Director Linda Mitchell.

Kate Nonesuch, from the Reading and Writing Centre in Duncan, talks about an electronic conference she will moderate on teaching and the empowerment of students.

The opportunities for partnership building and fund development among the private and corporate sector this year have been encouraging to say the least.

We are especially grateful to **Honda Canada**, **The Vancouver Sun**, **Listel Hotels** and **Indigo Books** for the financial contributions they made to the provincial family literacy fund. We would also like to thank **Scholastic Book Fairs** for the thousands of dollars worth of books they donated to more than 90 family literacy programs and services in our province.

The provincial and regional family literacy public awareness campaigns have generated awareness of the issues, provided a forum for discussion, created opportunities for needed contributions of resources and in-kind services, and built solid partnerships along the way. As a result, the BC Council for Families and the BC Association of Family Resource Programs have become formal partners with Literacy BC in provincial family literacy development.

Jean Rasmussen
Projects Manager
Provincial Family Literacy Development

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Family Literacy Activity in Pictures



Executive Director Linda Mitchell, Betty Carter, her daughter Tessa and Starbucks' Nicky Shaw celebrate the launch of Starbucks Coffee Company's All Books for Children (ABC) Book Drive and our Family Literacy Public Awareness Campaign at the VPL Children's branch in September.



September 14th National Children's Agenda Press Conference at UBC with Minister of Human Resources Development Canada Jane Stewart. Pictured are Minister Stewart and Premier Ujjal Dosanjh at the UBC Child Care Centre, as the federal government announces a \$2.2 billion funding commitment over 5 years for early childhood development. Literacy BC President Paul Gallagher and Jean Rasmussen met with the Minister.



Students at Queen Elizabeth Elementary School where Projects Manager Jean Rasmussen gave a presentation on the importance of reading on September 19.

More Highlights...

- September 8th Press Conference and launch of the Family Literacy Public Awareness Campaign and the kick-off of the Starbucks Coffee Company's All Books for Children (ABC) Book

Drive at the Vancouver Public Library, Central Branch. Many of our partners were on hand to help us celebrate. We also launched the BC Framework of Statements and Standards of Best Practices in Family Literacy

- September 13th Fundraising Presentation of "Beauty and the Beast" hosted by Pacific Press, with partial proceeds going to BC's family literacy field.
- October, 2000 Interprovincial/Territorial



September 19th **The Vancouver Sun's Raise-a-Reader Day Sponsor Breakfast and Raise-a-Reader Day, October 26.** Shown at the Breakfast are Betty Carter and daughter Tessa, Louise Watson of *The Vancouver Sun*, and former Literacy BC President Paul Gallagher.



Dr. Clyde Hertzman at the podium with HRDC Minister Jane Stewart and Grandview Elementary School Principal, Jock McLauchlan, at the announcement of federal **Canadian Child and Youth Development Research Network** funding in January.

Family Literacy Planning Forum, "Towards Greater Collaboration." 26 key family literacy representatives from across Canada participated in a two-day strategic planning Forum, to begin the process of

developing a vision and strategy for family literacy in Canada. A comprehensive report outlining these activities will be available in the next few months.

- On January 16, 2001, we attended the announcement at



Linda Mitchell at **Indigo Books**, North Vancouver, at the beginning of **Family Literacy/DayWeek** in January.

Grandview Elementary School by HRDC Minister Jane Stewart of the **Canadian Child and Youth Development Research Network** — \$2 million over five years to four research centres, including UBC.

Family Literacy Development – An Overview

YCA Students Report on Events

Two Literacy BC Youth Community Action (YCA) students were on hand to assist us at two events — the Word on the Street Festival and our Breakfast of Champions. Here are excerpts from the stories we asked them to write.

Word on the Street 2000

by Anita Chan

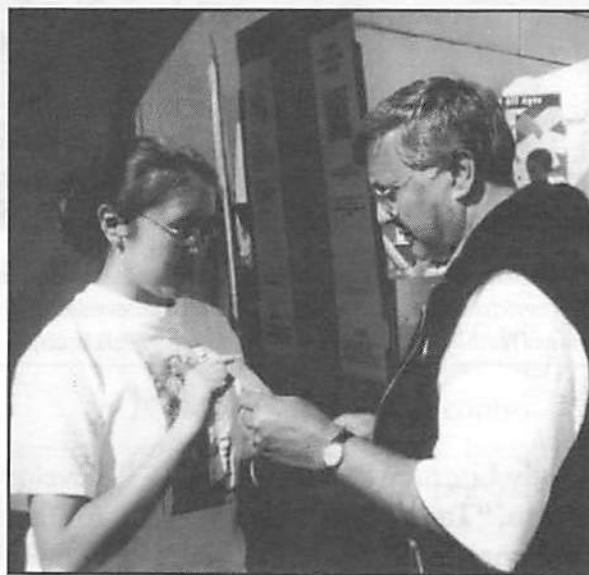
Under an unusually blistering sun, families, children, grandparents, local celebrities, politicians, and booklovers alike gathered by the thousands to take part in **Word on the Street** on September 24th outside the Vancouver Public Library's Central Branch, in Library Square. As expected, it was an enormous success! Literacy BC staff were stationed throughout the **Starbucks Literacy Lane**, so we were able to witness several of the events that were happening.

We shared the **Honda Family Literacy Tent** with Educacentre, Scholastic Books, the Learning Disabilities Association of B.C., Laubach and other groups who joined us to help promote and campaign for family literacy. There was an extremely successful turnout as thousands came by to learn more about family literacy and what could be done to enhance awareness. **Scholastic Book Fairs** generously donated children's books to be given away to those who had purchased book bags at the event.

At the **Canada Post** tent, more than 800 people of all ages took a minute from the bustle to write postcards to those who had "turned them onto reading." The turnout was amazing, and everyone was enthusiastic about the idea of taking some quiet time to write a spontaneous letter. Stamps were free, compliments of Canada Post, which generated much delight from the public - they took even more delight in being able to write family and friends overseas. After all the postage was used up (over \$400 worth!), people were glad to take the keepsake postcards home to their children, families, or to their classrooms to share.

At the young reader's stage, authors and children's performers read or performed some of their favorite children's books. Canadian actor Jay Brazeau was joined by other "surprise" guests reading their own

personal favorites, including Jim Byrnes and Premier Ujjal Dosanjh. Byrnes gathered a great crowd as he read excerpts from C.S. Lewis' children's classic, *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*. Premier Dosanjh apologized to the audience for his rusty storytelling skills before launching into Robert Munsch's *The Paperbag Princess*, which drew a great response and cheers from onlookers.



Premier Ujjal Dosanjh visits with our YCA student Anita Chan at the **Canada Post Tent for Literacy** at the **Word on the Street Book and Magazine Fair** on September 24. Literacy BC organized and staffed the first-ever **Honda BC Family Literacy Tent** on Literacy Lane.



The Breakfast of Champions

by Lan Sam

The early morning felt fresh as the sun came out, a day of excitement lay ahead as the Literacy BC annual **Breakfast of Champions** took place at the Vancouver Public Library's Central Branch. It was a huge event that celebrated families and learning, part of "Family Literacy Day week 2001" leading to National Family Literacy Day on January 27th. Our breakfast included a colorful set-up of Starbucks pastries, coffee and fresh fruit. The conference room included displays by Literacy BC and other groups to help promote and family literacy and lifelong learning.

As a YCA student involved with Literacy BC for the second year, it was amazing to collaborate with staff and to witness the dedication involved with making this day happen. My role involved greeting educators, librarians, parents, and people representing government and community organizations. Guests were handed a button and directed to registration. Minutes flew by and soon the room was filled with people from all sorts of fields. It was extremely exciting and encouraging to witness people united together by a significant cause that affects the lives of many people.

We listened to special guest speakers who touched on the cause of literacy from different viewpoints. There were two moving speeches - one was Premier Dosanjh's, about how literacy affected him as a child; the other was Mary Gordon's speech linking poverty to early childhood literacy. I felt that both speakers passionately touched on literacy issues in unique ways that stirred strong thoughts from listeners. I felt really proud to shake the hand of Premier Dosanjh, and other notable speakers who all contributed to this wonderful event. After each speaker finished, my job was to hand out a red gift bag from Chapters containing a special book.

The 2001 Breakfast of Champions was a successful event and certainly one that I won't forget. I am proud to be a part of a cause that affects many people in society in a multitude of ways. The Breakfast of Champions will continue to foster further awareness and commitment to literacy and provide hope for a stronger future.

Family Literacy

Celebrating Families and Learning

National Family Literacy Day, January 27, sponsored by **Honda Canada** and **ABC CANADA**, is celebrated in communities across the country to spotlight the fact that learning is a family affair and that the family is the change agent in breaking the intergenerational cycle of low literacy.

Literacy BC, along with our many partners, launched the third annual **Family Literacy Week Campaign on January 21, 2001** with **Write On!** — a festival for children and families sponsored by the Lower Mainland Council of the International Reading Association. This event celebrated reading and writing as valuable activities for the whole family.

On Monday January 22, we hosted the second annual **"Breakfast of Champions"**, catered by Starbucks Coffee Company. More than 175 key representatives from government, business, labour, unions, schools, libraries and community organizations attended the Breakfast, including **Premier Ujjal Dosanjh**, who read the **Family Literacy Day 2001** proclamation. The Premier spoke eloquently about the importance of literacy and what it meant to him personally.

Our three guest speakers gave powerful presentations that left

the Breakfast crowd with much to think about. They were:

- Dr. Clyde Hertzman, University of British Columbia, research on Community Mapping and School Readiness
- Dave Park, Chief Economist, Vancouver Board of Trade, on Early Childhood Development: The Economic Case
- Mary Gordon, Roots of Empathy, on Connecting Neuroscience, Family Literacy and Life-Long Learning

During the week, Susan Hall, Reading Consultant and co-author of *Straight Talk About Reading*, and Pam Ottley, an Educational Psychologist with a specialty in Phonological Awareness, presented their research to more than 100 participants. The response to these workshops was outstanding.

The Thursday evening forum, **Literacy: Where Do Parents and Community Fit In?** sponsored by the BCTF, the Vancouver Elementary Schools Teachers Association and the Vancouver Public Library, was a great opportunity for families, teachers, literacy practitioners and community organizations to come together in an open, informal environment to talk about where the community fits into the literacy equation.

And on January 27, teachers, parents and children from 10 inner city Vancouver schools celebrated **Reading Together Day on January 27** at the Vancouver Library.

We would like to thank our many partners, supporters and sponsors of Family Literacy Day/Week in B.C. They are:

Vancouver Public Library, Vancouver School Board, Honda Canada, Starbucks Coffee Company, Lower Mainland Council of the International Reading Association, International Dyslexia Association, BC Branch, the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, BC Teachers Federation, VESTA, BC Library Association, Scholastic Book Fairs, Vancouver Grizzlies Foundation, Westcoast Energy, Chapters, Indigo Books, First Call, Canada Post Corporation, BC Council for Families, BC Association of Family Resource Programs, BC & Yukon Community Newspapers Association, Roots of Empathy, Windows of Opportunity for Vancouver's Children and Youth, The Vancouver Sun and our funders, the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology and the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Development Canada.

Family Literacy

Celebrating Families and Learning



*The Premier reading the B.C. Family Literacy Day Proclamation in front of colleagues and guests at the **Breakfast of Champions** on January 22.*

We would like to send a special thanks to the family literacy practitioners, volunteers, parents and children who make family literacy programs so rewarding.



Celebrate
Family Literacy Day
January 27



FAMILY LITERACY DAY

Sponsored by

HONDA



Family Literacy Day/Week ...

Regional Roundup

In the Okanagan ...

Okanagan Regional Coordinator **Leslie Kiehlbauch** organized a series of events, including a screening of “**Ellen’s Story**” with special guest, **Ellen Szita**, at OUC campuses.

A panel presentation, **Pulling Together for Literacy**, targeted to health, education and social work practitioners, featured **Mary Gordon**, (Roots of Empathy), **Michael Goldberg**, Social Planning and Research Council of B.C., **Ellen Szita**, **Jan Sawyer**, OUC instructor; and **Judy Simms**, Literacy Project Coordinator, Shuswap Family Resource Centre.

Community Forums, **Literacy For All: What Does It Take?** with **Michael Goldberg**, **Mary Gordon** and **Ellen Szita** took place in **Kelowna, Salmon Arm, and Penticton**.

Leslie Kiehlbauch writes: “In Salmon Arm, about 40 people in education and social work, volunteer tutors and members of the OUC Campus Advisory Committee attended the panel presentation. In addition, we were honoured by the presence of the Mayor of Sicamous. **Ellen Szita**’s presentation drew an audience of about 35 ABE students, as well as some volunteer tutors and OUC Campus Advisory Committee members. For the community forum we had about 30 community members — business people, community volunteers, and private individuals.

What came out of the event in Salmon Arm was the formation of a Community Literacy Task Force, made up of service club representatives, professionals in education and social work, college and school district representatives, and ABE students, who are committed to a teamwork approach to literacy promotion and program development. This is a major step forward for literacy in the Shuswap area — there was definitely a positive increase in public awareness throughout the Okanagan.”

In the Squamish/Whistler region ...

Regional Coordinator

Michelle Lebeau organized a local “Breakfast of Champions” featuring presentations from the Sechelt community nutritionist on the school breakfast program and the school psychologist on early literacy intervention; a family literacy needs assessment project update and a Saturday family event at the Library. All events were well-attended and enjoyed.

From the Fraser Valley...

Deanna Reder, Regional Literacy Coordinator highlights an array of events:

The Mission Literacy Association held a “Townhall for Family Literacy.”

A “Businesses, Books and Breakfast” meeting took place on January 26 to provide local committed businesses the opportunity to discuss with literacy practitioners how both can work together to make a difference. A Family Literacy



Family Literacy Day/Week ...

Regional Roundup

Day Celebration was held at the Mission library, as local celebrities read their favourite books to children, and 12 Spinoza Bears from the Vancouver Grizzlies were distributed to family literacy programs at schools in Mission and Abbotsford.

In the East Kootenay Region...

All communities held events for Family Literacy Day, including encouraging school read-a-thons for parents and grandparents, crossword puzzles for students to bring home to their families, and pajama parties with storytelling. Leona Gadsby reports: "It's really wonderful how schools in my region are picking up the "literacy" idea

and encouraging reading for everyone at school, with children and at home."

In Windermere...

Betty Knight, Family Literacy Coordinator, Windermere Valley, writes: "Here in the Windermere Valley, I concentrated on promotion in the various schools throughout the Valley. I distributed posters, buttons and brochures to teachers who sit on my advisory committee (who took them to other teachers in their schools) and to principals in other schools to share with teachers. I made up a literacy crossword puzzle and adapted a Literacy Scavenger Hunt developed by Joanne Harris in the West Kootenay and distributed them to all the schools. These activities were designed to be taken home and completed with the help of parents. I also gave a

local reporter information about family literacy day and encouraged her to telephone all the schools to find out what they had planned to mark the day. Teachers on my committee told me that the phone call from the reporter encouraged all the schools to think of events... they all had something going on — a pajama party reading night, bringing local people in to read to kids, a free reading afternoon. Each school did something different."

...and in the West Kootenay...

Jennifer Cliff-Marks reports that all family literacy Coordinators held events, including the launch of a Mother Goose Program in Kaslo, distribution of books to coordinators in six PLWK communities to launch Books for Babies, and a Family Literacy Day Open House in Nakusp.

Finally, from Northern Lights ...

The Aboriginal Literacy and Parenting Skills (ALAPS) project in Dawson Creek held an Open House and other family literacy day events were organized throughout the region.

Heads Up

Summer Literacy Institute

The Literacy BC 2001 Summer Literacy Institute will take place July 23 to August 3, at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby Campus. The Summer Institute is open to literacy practitioners from across Canada. We can accommodate approximately 60 people each week and shared townhouse accommodation is available on site. The registration fee per week will be approximately \$400, which includes accommodation, meals and training. Registration will be on a first come first basis.

Week One

(Monday July 23 to Friday July 27)

Focus on two main streams:

- **Screening for Success**
A two day certificate workshop for literacy practitioners working with adults with learning disabilities (from the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada — Train the Trainer model)
- **Solution Focused Approach**
to effective communication with learners (developing empathy, problem solving and active listening skills, how to create a safe and caring environment for learners with multiple challenges, when and how to refer learners to community agencies)

(Monday July 30 to

Friday August 3)

Implementing a Family Literacy Program: a Four-Component Comprehensive Approach.

Featuring key trainers Nancy Sledd and Robin Jurczyk, Family Literacy Specialists, National Center for Family Literacy (Kentucky) and Leona Gadsby and Jennifer Cliff-Marks, Family Literacy Specialists, Columbia Basin Alliance for Learning (British Columbia).

This week-long Certificate course will address the following:

- the philosophical, theoretical and practical bases of family literacy
- research findings which support a more intense family literacy model
- the four key components of a quality family literacy program
- the importance of teamwork in family literacy
- family literacy as a tool for community development

An information brochure will be available mid-April. We will automatically mail the brochure to the following: B.C. Adult Literacy Cost Shared Program contact list, participants and instructors from previous Summer Institutes hosted by Literacy BC, B.C. family literacy programs and services, community literacy programs in B.C., Literacy BC Board members, Regional Literacy Coordinators, B.C. Ministry of Education Regional Coordinators and literacy coalitions across the country. If you do not receive a brochure by the end of April, please contact us and one will be mailed to you. In addition, the brochure will be posted on our website and on NALD.

May 10 - 12, 2001, Ottawa

Week Two

Distribution of Family Literacy Funds to the field

Our family literacy fund now includes donations from Honda Canada, the Vancouver Sun's Raise-a-Reader campaign, Indigo Books and Listel Hotels. We are in the process of developing the backgrounder and application for distribution. As in the past, money will be available to family literacy programs and services that meet the criteria outlined in the application. Expect the "package" soon.

Heads Up

Early Years: Building Connections

Featuring a diverse range of speakers, including

- Clyde Hertzman, Department of Health Care and Epidemiology, Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia
- Honourable Margaret McCain, Co-chair, Ontario's Early Years Study
- J. Fraser Mustard, Honourary Chair, Founders' Network/ Co-Chair of the Early Years Learning Study for the Ontario government
- David (Dan) R. Offord, Professor of Psychiatry and Head of the Division of Child Psychiatry, McMaster University and Director of the Canadian Centre for Studies of Children at Risk
- Monica Patten, President and CEO, Community Foundations of Canada
- Lois Yelland, Medical Officer of Health, Vancouver

Building Connections will bring together community members, practitioners, educators, researchers, policy makers and civic leaders to share strategies and tools for mobilizing and evaluating community action on the early years agenda.

To receive a registration package, call (613) 596-8211 ext. 8221.

email: register@ocdsb.edu.on.ca

website: www.earlyyears.ca

Message from ...

First Call BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition

First Call is a coalition of more 50 than provincial partners, individuals and organizations who promote legislation, policy, and practice that will enable children and youth to achieve their full potential and to participate in making a better world. We believe that children and youth need first call on society's resources.

Fall 2000 – What we've done

For First Call, the last few months have been a rollercoaster ride of activity. It has seen us complete and distribute the Federal Election Survey on Child and Youth Issues, and release the annual BC Campaign 2000 Child Poverty Report Card. The Report Card and accompanying Fact Sheets were released at an all-candidate's meeting on poverty on November 20th, and the day was also marked with a wake-up call and a series of Stone Soups in communities around the province.

This year, a good news, bad news story emerged from the report card. The good news is that the incidence of child poverty is decreasing. This is an indication that government policies such as the BC Family Bonus, do work. However, the bad news is that most low-income families live with incomes far below the poverty line. This gap could be reduced if the BC government did not "claw back" the benefits, such as the BC Family Bonus and the Canada Child Tax Benefit, that are provided to families on welfare. So, the overall message is that we are now on the right track to eliminating child poverty but we must keep reminding our governments that it is not acceptable to have even once child live in poverty, especially in a country as prosperous as Canada.

To view the BC Campaign 2000 Report Card and Fact Sheets in their entirety, log onto our website at www.firstcallbc.org or call Cindy Carson, Coordinator, at (604) 875-3629.

Look what's New

Resources

on our shelves...

The National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), Kentucky, is a nonprofit organization founded in 1989. The NCFL provides leadership for family literacy development nationwide; promotes policies at the national and state level to support family literacy; develops and demonstrates new practices that address the needs of families in a changing social, economic and political landscape; conducts research to expand the knowledge base of family literacy; and creates and supports systems to help sustain family literacy programs.

These four NCFL resources are available on loan.

1. *The Family Literacy Answer Book: a Guidebook for Teachers and Administrators of Family Literacy Programs* (NCFL, 1997).

A guidebook on the four component model of family literacy programs - adult education basic skills, early childhood education, parent groups for education and support, and parent and child together time. This guide is an answer book to many of the questions the NCFL is most often asked — with sample forms that can be used in programs, as well as lesson plans and an extensive bibliography.

2. *Pathways: a primer for family literacy program design and development* (NCFL, 2000)

Ten years in the making, “Pathways” is a practical guide to starting and sustaining a quality family literacy program, based on the experiences of thousands of practitioners who have made family literacy their calling. The book includes an historical overview of family literacy, recommendations for community assessments, finding community partners, case studies, and questions to guide you in developing a family literacy action plan.

3. *Work-related Learning Guide for Family Literacy and Adult Education Organizations. Jobs for the Future*, in collaboration with NCFL, 1999.

Work-related learning experiences can include field trips, “job shadowing,” career rotations, mentoring, community service placements, and interning. This guide illustrates the various types of work-related learning, and identifies the supports needed from employers, training organizations, social services and other agencies to implement them.

4. *Connecting Families and Work: Family Literacy Bridges the Gap*. NCFL, 2000.

An overview in brief (20 page) booklet form, of the NCFL, including NCFL research findings on the work-literacy connection, family literacy definitions and some examples of successful programs around the U.S.

Literacy-based supports for young adults with FAS/FAE.

Margaret Raymond and Joe Belanger.

An adult literacy cost – shared project, funded by the National Literacy Secretariat, and MAETT, 2000. You can read and download this resource from: www.ccsa.ca/FAS%20Report/titlepage.htm

Other FAS resources can be found at www.ccsa.ca/fasgen.htm

***Help Your Child Become a Reader: A Guide for Reading Conversations, Activities and Games.* Joan Oldford-Matchim. Grass Roots Press, 1994.**

This resource is for any reader (parent, grandparent, relative or friend) who is the “significant other” of a young child learning to read. The book provides suggestions on how significant others can involve themselves in conversations and activities with books and reading games, and

how positive response to children's reading behaviours contributes to their identity as readers and their knowledge and beliefs about reading.

The Health of Canada's Children, 3rd edition. Canadian Institute of Child Health, 2000.

Through charts and graphs, this book illustrates the indicators of children's health and well-being, and profiles four child development stages — pregnancy/infancy; preschool, school age and youth. One chapter examines the health of Canada's aboriginal children and youth, others deal with mental and environmental health, disabilities, and income equity. The information comes from sources such as census data, vital statistics, and hospitalization records.

Eager to Learn - A course on Family Literacy. Community Services Council, Newfoundland, 1999.

The *Eager to Learn* course is based on the belief that enrollment in ABE gives adult learners the unique ability to co-learn with their children or other young persons in their home environment. This course can be used as an ABE communications skills credit, a community course for parents, as part of a family resource centre learning program, or as a training tool with day care workers or early childhood educators. *Eager to Learn* has been designed as a resource binder, with course modules that can be used independently.

Adult Learners Receive Bursary Awards

Literacy BC is pleased to announce the winners of the 2000 PACE Bursaries. The 23 awards to adult, part time students, ranging from \$50 to \$700, were made possible through a bursary fund started and developed by the Pacific Association for Continuing Education (PACE). A total of \$10,814 was awarded to the qualifying students who came from the nine institutions listed below. In August of last year, the PACE Bursary Fund was turned over to be managed by Literacy BC.

Eligible applicants are adults, 19 years or older, who attend a continuing education or undergraduate program less than 18 hours per week, are registered in fewer than three courses and can demonstrate financial need. Students are required to submit official receipts for course fees and books in order to qualify for an award. The next award deadline is September 30, 2001.

New PACE Bursary applications forms will soon be available at the awards office of most educational institutions in B.C. They will also be available for downloading from the Literacy BC website at www.nald.ca/lbc.htm.

If you wish to have an application mailed to you, please call Literacy BC at 1-800-663-1293.

A special thank you to former PACE members who have made this fund possible. Your generous support for many years has helped countless students have the opportunity to acquire the skills and training they need to succeed.

PACE Bursary 2000 Awards

INSTITUTION	AWARD
Camosun	\$700
Douglas College	\$50
Douglas College	\$130
Douglas College	\$575
Douglas College	\$700
Justice Institute	\$630
Kwantlen University College	\$700
Okanagan University College (OUC)	\$350
OUC	\$408
OUC	\$624
OUC	\$700
University of B.C. (UBC)	\$305
UBC	\$527
UBC	\$630
University of Victoria & Kwantlen University College	\$700
Vancouver Community College (VCC)	\$100
VCC	\$222
VCC	\$403
VCC	\$410
VCC	\$550
VCC	\$700
VCC	\$700

Getting Out of the Way: An Electronic Conference on the Hub, April 16 to May 25, 2001

Moderated by Kate Nonesuch

Getting Out of the Way

Empowering students is a buzzword that implies that teachers do the empowering, but I think it may be connected more to *not* doing something. It seems to me that if I just get out of the way, students will take power—individual power over their own learning, and group power over decisions that affect everyone.

In September 1999, the college fundamentals program was

moved to a downtown storefront in Duncan. We wanted to figure out how to give as much power in running the Centre to students as we could.

Every Monday we have a meeting about running the Centre and make decisions about how to spend a budget of approximately \$3000 per year (the money comes from grants, donations and work students do). We also make decisions about policy issues like bringing kids to school, privacy of information, honoraria paid to students who speak at conferences, and who cleans the kitchen. Teachers bring some questions about class content to the meeting for decision. This week for example, we are proposing some major changes in the timetable.

During the process of trying to empower students, I learned some things about myself and my teaching. Some themes came up again and again, and these are some lessons I learned.

I am not ashamed to be represented by the group

When we first started the Monday meetings, I began to worry. What would happen if the meeting made the “wrong” decision? What if we made the College look bad, or if I looked unprofessional? Sorting through this has been the hardest part

about sharing power with students.

I can trust that students will be able to do what they say they will do

If I lay down the task and assign parts of it to students, many will be too polite or too intimidated to say no, but will end up “letting me down.” When they have the power to define the task and choose what to take on, they will usually follow through, and when they don’t, it is not me they let down.

I stay out of power struggles

So much of the authority and power is on my side that I feel I will never be able to divest myself of it. In any case, I know that any time I say, “Do this” when the student is saying “No!”, the teachable moment disappears.

I need to talk about money—it represents power

I’m paid to be there, they are not. I am richer than most of them. I’m the one with access to the petty cash. So we give the Monday meeting total control over a small part of the budget, and we’re clear about who pulls which purse strings.

I can be my authentic self

Sharing power with students is a liberating experience. I can take off the mask that says, “I know

The Hub

The Hub connects people in literacy from across B.C. and offers opportunities to:

- share ideas and experiences
- build relationships
- develop community
- reduce isolation
- access resources and information
- plan and facilitate group work
- participate in new forums for discussion and learning

To find out how you can join this literacy on-line community, contact Sandy Middleton at Literacy BC.

**[smiddleton@thehub.
capcollege.bc.ca](mailto:smiddleton@thehub.capcollege.bc.ca)** or call
toll-free 1-800-663-1293

everything, and I'm in charge," and be much more myself than ever before. I laugh often with genuine delight.

I need to deal with emotions

Where there is power, there is emotion. I say out loud that what we are doing is hard and scary; I say that I am scared and excited. I often say, "Okay, I am going to check out the feelings here," when a decision has been made.

I am looking forward to the on-line conference about empowering students, and hope many of you will be able to join the discussion (see box). We will also report on the conference in the next issue of the Literacy BC newsletter.

Kate Nonesuch teaches at the Reading and Writing Centre, a storefront program of Malaspina University-College, Cowichan Campus. She has written math, English and Science curriculum at the fundamentals level, and is the editor of *Making Connections: Literacy and EAL Curriculum from a Feminist Perspective* (Toronto: CCLOW, 1996). She often gives workshops around BC about her "Never-Fail" method of teaching writing.

Provincial Conference Follow-up

A message from Linda Mitchell, Executive Director

Last November we held a provincial conference, **Setting an Agenda for Tomorrow: Making a Difference Together.** The

conference, which brought together over 140 diverse people from across B.C., was one key step in a broader consultation with the literacy field. Learners, practitioners, administrators, funders and others came together for 2 1/2 days to listen, talk, and create visions for the next decade.

The conference keynote speakers were journalist Peter Calamai, who has been tracking developments in literacy for more than 10 years, and Lesra Martin, who spoke at the conference about the power that is in each of us to make a difference. Senator Joyce Fairbairn, Special Advisor for Literacy to the Minister of Human Resources Development Canada and a longtime literacy champion, gave a warm and eloquent address.

A few of the themes that emerged from the conference were:

- Literacy connects, and needs to be connected, with health,



Literacy BC Provincial Conference – l to r: Special guests Senator Joyce Fairbairn, Lesra Martin, with Linda Mitchell and Paul Gallagher.

learning, work, individual well being, self-esteem, confidence, citizenship, justice, safer neighbourhoods, and sustainable communities.

- Literacy is not a charity, but a foundation for learning.
- Funding is a central issue.
- Learners are key ambassadors for literacy and learner involvement is essential.
- Building and developing community should underlie all literacy policies, programs and practices.

Literacy BC is in the process of carrying out interviews and focus groups in 43 communities across the province, conducting 300 telephone interviews with key decision-makers, and analyzing the research of the past decade into best policies and practices.

A full report on the conference and consultation will be available in June 2001. To ensure that you receive a copy of the report, call us (toll free 1-800-663-1293).



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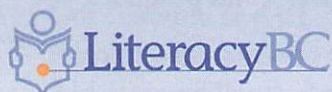
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